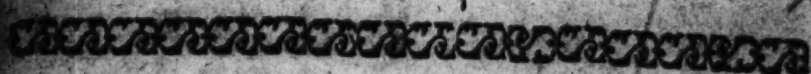


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FIRST SERMON

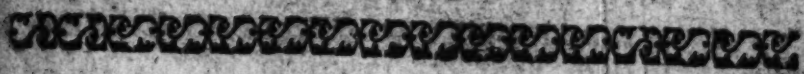
Preach'd at the

Opening of the ORATORY,

On Sunday, July 3. 1726.

On the Design, and Reasons, of
the Institution.

By Henry J



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That which hath not been told them, shall they see, and that which they have not heard, shall they consider.

Religion and knowledge, tho' both lay a claim to the highest antiquity, and are coeval with the first rise of mankind; tho' they should be inseparable companions, and mutual supports to each other; yet the course of human affairs has been so dispos'd, that observations may arise in either, which may carry a face of novelty; like the famous river, which loses its hidden tide beneath the surface of the earth, and then re-appears; still really the same, tho', to the eye, another current.

This is the scope of the holy prophet in the place alledg'd, and this will give a sanction to the design of our present assembly.

Isaiah, the evangelical seer, describes in this chapter, the future religion of the Messiah, as an event that would appear very singular and astonishing.

He commands the captive daughter of Sion to awake, put on her strength, and loose her self from the hands of her neck, for they shall know in that day it is God that speaks, behold! it is he.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of peace and salvation! That which hath not been told them, shall they see, and that which they have not heard, they shall consider.

Here the Declaration of the Gospel it self is term'd new, unheard before, which removes all prejudice, rais'd merely on that bottom.

The Connexion between this account, and our immediate subject, will, at the first glance, be manifest.

To retrieve the morning lustre of gospel truth, and dispel the shadows of modern error, is the aim of one branch of the institution we now celebrate, as a more perfect establishment in favour of universal knowledge, than has occur'd either in this, or any nation, is the other part of it.

These, tho' in themselves as ancient as the understanding of men, and the being of christianity, yet represented, and apply'd in the view now intended, are, in a great degree, to us new, and in a public light unconsider'd.

But then, originally, the use of letters, and the dispensation of our christian covenant, were new; the sacred volumes of our faith are call'd expressly the new testament: so that it is not the seeming particularity, but the truth and justness of an undertaking, that is, in all respects, to be regarded.

This is not offer'd, as an apology for our design: was that necessary, it would be unavailing.

If the natural weight and importance of the affair does not create its own reception, it must, it ought to fall. All that is now propos'd,

propoſ'd, is to ſhew, that we are countenanc'd by no leſs abettors than Iſaiah, and our bleſſed Lord himſelf, to engage your attention, and overthrow all prejudice.

Various, ſtrong are the reaſons of our purpoſes. Abuſes have multiply'd in underſtanding, and religion.

On the one hand, a declenſion, an apoſtaſy, from our moſt holy faith, is become too general: On the other, the path of knowledge and literature has been much perverted.

To recover a juſt zeal for the former, we appeal to the antient founders of our chriſtian profeſſion, as the ableſt, the trueſt judges.

To repair the inconveniencies of the latter, we have concerted an enterprize, in which the ſeveral defects ſhall be amended, and perfection, as near as poſſible, attain'd.

The deſign is, in it ſelf, of weight: however it be executed, it has a right to the approbation of the judicious, and the candid.

On that footing, we ſhall advance with reſolution, and chearfully take your preſent encouragement, as an auspicious omen of ſucceſs and victory.

The detail of our ſubject will extend it ſelf moſt properly, under the following Articles.

I. We are to exhibit an idea of the nature and conduct of our ſcheme.

II. Submit the pleaſ and motives, from which we would preſume on your concurrence in it.

I. An account of the nature, and intended management of our undertaking will be expedient.

The entire foundation of it is ecclesiastical, of a religious tendency.

But since the light and aid of human erudition, of the arts, the sciences, and the tongues are requisite to explain the holy scriptures, and master the body of theology, it will, on that score, include an academy of literature.

In both articles, it is modell'd to answer the intention in a more compleat manner, than has been hitherto offer'd to the consideration of an age, too refin'd and inquisitive, to be longer impos'd upon by false pretences, either in human or divine learning.

On this authority, our universities, (which, as far as they are learned bodies, consisting of good masters and scholars, and not monastic, or useless foundations, we profoundly honour, and to whom we would be subservient in the academical branch of our Scheme) will find no cause to complain of us.

For, as I am publickly * commission'd to be a teacher of religion, and the academy is

* All local right of exercising sacred functions is from the crown. so that the right of the Orazory is equal to any episcopal authority in this realm: All the local exercise, as well as the original right, of that authority here, being entirely and only from the crown; our clergy are laymen, for W. P. the first, was no bishop, and therefore could not make a clergyman.

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erected to serve us in that character, by calling in the assistance of learning to make our very bibles familiar to the meanest capacity, I am also commission'd to be a teacher of human learning, as far as it is essential to make the divine intelligible.

It is to be observ'd, that their charters are not patents of monopoly, to engross the communication of knowledge.

And the number of academies, allow'd in this capital, tho' not founded on a power of religious instruction, are proofs, they are not injur'd by our pretension, as we could largely demonstrate, they are really serv'd by it.

Nor will the modern churches be entitled to load us with any pressing objection. With them we are ready to communicate, as far as we are capable, and to their judgment we shall pay all proper deference.

But we think, we are privileg'd to take the same liberty of varping from them, which they take of differing from one another, and sometimes from themselves.

Our right of exercising our private judgment is equal. We assert an equal freedom of conscience, accountable to God only; since no human judicature can take a cognisance of the soul.

The whole reformation turns on this principle. The protestant interest must sink, if it be deny'd: and the civil constitution of our native Britannia, the seat of true heroic fortitude, the parent of free-born spirits, will be subverted, if she suffers the minds of her sons to be fetter'd; or the glorious spring,
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and inbred taste of just liberty, to be cramp'd or baffled.

The particular system, which we profess as a Church, and which diversifies us from other communions, is that of the primitive church in the first 500 years after Christ, being the ages of the four first general councils.

In that time we use this distinction; if a contradiction be demonstrated between the current sense of any two periods of it, we adhere to the more ancient, if other considerations be equal.

If an opposition should be prov'd between the voice of the primitive church, in that whole compass of time, and that of the scripture, we shou'd disregard that primitive consent, and espouse, as in duty bound, the word of God.

Indeed we believe there is no such opposition, as this last mention'd; on the contrary, we are firmly persuaded; that in all cases, where the new testament is doubtful, or obscure, the concurrent evidence of the first ages should determine the doubt, and clear the obscurity.

To specify every point at present, in which the modern churches deviate from the primitive, would be an immense task, and perhaps, at once, not very agreeable.

It is sufficient to lay it down as a certain principle, that, where ever a modern church takes the boldness to vary from that of her wiser forefathers, in the time above limited, and which I would be ever constru'd to intend, the balance ought to be cast on the side of the primitive, as in all respects qualify'd
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to be a more competent judge of the question.

To an attentive Eye, curious to search the merits of this argument, a growing number of modern deviations from the elder principles would rise up: as to our very bibles, the code of scripture, the rule of faith: the instituted matter, essence, and form of the sacrament; the subordination of particular synods to general councils, in point of authority: the nullity of the English orders, (and the entire dependence of the church upon the state, in consequence of that nullity, overthrowing what some argu'd about the distinct and indelible character, in a late famous case, before the house of lords) by comparing the clause, by which only Matthew Parker was consecrated, with the express consecrations of antiquity, which only can be true episcopal commissions; the exercise of power of the church, unknown to the first ages, over the bodies, lives, and fortunes of men; the admitting those to baptism, who never were catechumens, making baptism essential; without an apostolical mission; the making human decisions, creeds, constitutions, &c. articles of faith, and as necessary parts of religion, as revelations from God; the corruptions, and all consequences, flowing from fix'd possessions, annex'd only to certain uncertain schemes of religion, and calling those corruptions, possessions, and schemes, all together, the church, &c. These will yield sufficient matter at present to enquire upon; and the rest I refer to my articles, and future representations. This, in the scripture phrase, might be thought a brand pluck'd out of the fire; but another scrip-

scripture commands, that truth and peace must attend upon each other.

Our drift would be, in the most calm, and rational manner, to revive a due veneration for those good old days, exalt the genius of the primitive ages, and make them the standard of our religion, as they ought to have been, of the reformation.

And it is a justice we owe the hopes we would form in you, to declare the present advances we are induc'd to make towards an end so very righteous, so extremely desirable.

The execution of this plan must divide it self into two branches, the liturgy, and the work of preaching.

The first step we have taken in the liturgy, in compliance with the reigning prepossessions arising from a popular custom, is, to follow the usual method, but to give a primitive turn to the matter, and the language, by drawing both from the scripture and antiquity, avoiding that repetition, and prolixity, which create so general a complaint.

For it is our persuasion, that every act of worship is more agreeable to the will of God, the more it is conformable to his word, and the apostolical platform.

But we do not impose a written liturgy, as in it self necessary, nor are we confin'd to one liturgy. Any form within our limited time is proper to be employ'd by us.

But among all the sacred offices then us'd, we regard those of the constitutions of Clement, as the most authentic; and we deem them to be, in substance, if not in words, convey'd by apostolical tradition, from

from the same evidence, on which we receive the new testament; notwithstanding the charge of spuriousness, which some have lavishly thrown on the most valuable memoirs of original christianity.

In the function of the word, our view is, to recover the spirit of the ancient preachers, and assert the honour of the English pulpit: to institute a regular, compleat course of divinity, in all its branches, critical, historical, speculative, moral; to banish for ever from this island, the Gothic manner, the mere still life, the lethargy of preaching, which reverses the miracle of our Lord, changes the wine into water, and leaves that congeal'd, for want of motion.

The composition of our sermons we shall endeavour to polish, and to animate their public delivery.

But in our lectures, which may turn chiefly on some learned and curious point of information, we shall pursue a more familiar free turn of style, and exhibit them in reading. Since the incidental mixtures of quotation, numbers, and the like, may render it improper, if not impracticable, to speak them.

The whole theological scheme, presented in this channel, as it is entirely new, so it will be labour'd to a degree, superiour to all present or past attempts of the kind.

We shall try to penetrate and unfold its most hidden recesses to the meanest capacity, rescue it from imposture and fallacy, give you the whole impartial truth of it, and do the justice due to all other religions, to examine their several pleas and pretensions in
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their full force, and without the least prejudice in favour of our own; form the right balance of the most equal and disinterested comparison, without bigotry to any one system, or servile attachment to any postulata whatsoever.

Pass we now to our academical undertaking, the subserviency of which to religion will justify the immediate display we think our selves oblig'd to give of it.

Its design is no less than that of an universal school of science and letters, in theory and practice, for instruction, exercise, and accomplishment, in all the parts of them.

The want of an university in this capital, has been often deplo'd.

Europe is the general seat of politeness, and this is the only Metropolis, which is destitute of an university.

Its advantage would outweigh every objection: it would be improv'd by the opportunities of converse and intercourse, the residence of the court, which is, or ought to be the supreme standard of elegance, the variety of tastes, pursuits, characters, professions, and a thousand other enlargements.

The defects, the narrowness of our usual education might here expect a more probable cure.

Licentiousness of manners might here be check'd by the same restraint, and put under as wholesome discipline, as we experience it elsewhere.

Nor could it be thought an injury to others; unless they be look'd upon as privileg'd markets of learning, exclusive of other places;

for the distribution of it, which would be a common injury to all mankind.

They are bodies corporate, vested by the crown with certain immunities; to invade their rights, and to exercise their jurisdiction, to confer their legal qualifications, would be an unnatural offer; but to discharge the office of a preceptor in the sciences they ought to teach, is no encroachment on their tenure. It is rather an enforcement to their main concern, and an addition to their glory.

But it is our aim to redress the complaints of misconduct in their institution, as well as to supply, in some measure, the absence of an university, in this great city.

Some exceptions have been taken on this head, which demand a remedy, and should therefore be excus'd in the mention. Bigotry to a set of notions, a confin'd way of thinking, a negligence of some of the most useful and polite arts; a management by interest, and party more than an encouragement of genius and industry; a forbidding loftiness and austerity in the ruling part, which tends rather to lessen the relish of virtue, and discipline, than to promote it, and an enslaving of youth to subscriptions, tests, and forms, which they neither understand, nor believe, nor approve; these, and other complaints, with the train of ill consequences flowing from each of them, we would employ our humble endeavours, with the utmost submission, to rectify.

But our intention is still more extensive; to diffuse a taste of literature and just thinking among persons of all ranks and capacities, without the profusion of time and ex-

pence, which must attend a more formal application.

That all indifferently may be furnish'd with a ready key to judge rightly, advance properly, and if they have a call to it, master compleatly any division of knowledge, in a more advantageous manner, than the methods hitherto establish'd, have been calculated to satisfy.

Whatever shall appear to be deficient in education for the service of the church or state, to adorn the learned, useful, or elegant faculties of upper or common life, in the sphere of the court, in the law of nations, civil or municipal, in medicine, and all the arts dependent upon them, whatever is defective in the training to their acquirement, our design is contriv'd to repair, and facilitate.

This end we propose to attain by practice, as well as information; declaiming shall be improv'd to speaking, and dispute to conference.

The converse and correspondence of the most eminent in all liberal professions shall supply the imperfection of our own narrow light.

The observations and improvements of the antient times shall be reviv'd.

The discoveries and experiments of the moderns shall be illustrated.

A regular course and praxis, in the several arts, shall be instituted.

The most prudent measures for the encouragement of merit shall be pursu'd.

An amicable league of society shall be form'd on the soundest principles.

And

And truth and virtue, uniformly and vigorously promoted, to cultivate the genius of our island.

That awakening word raises me farther, to inform you, that we shall consult its particular interest, in the strongest tenor of our endeavours.

Full oft, has an English academy been delineated, long has it been desir'd, here the actual foundation of it shall be attempted.

And what has requir'd the spirit of a distinguishing monarch, and a whole realm to commence abroad, shall here, on the single impulse of a private mind, be push'd into being at least, and with the divine blessing, and the smile of our superiors, executed.

We confide in the native harmony of human souls; we trust, that if the heart of one, however undeserving, beats high to a laudable enterprize, the rest will second it, and operate with an equal movement.

Nor shall our noble language, nor shall our history, be overlook'd.

The former, like our arms, ought to bear the laurel from France, which it merits, as well as from antient Greece and Rome, in delicacy, in force, in majesty, in beauty.

The latter is entitl'd to our peculiar care, to unravel, to ascertain, to digest it.

Let us here emulate, in the name of all the genii of our country, the efforts of a neighbouring nation, that of Portugal.

Her Monarch, and people conspire to illustrate her story, and be, in the first place, most trulyp masters of their own home,

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Let not our Britannia in that yield the palm to her, who is her inferior in every other instance of glory.

But we shall not confine our selves to the beaten path in our disquisitions: if a topic rises to our view, that is uncommon or occasional, we shall readily exhibit it. Nothing shall be excluded, that tends to improve, or give a rational delight to the understanding.

Nbode all, what shall most strongly engage our attention, shall be the beautiful, and long neglected science of rhetoric and elocution.

The word of God should be the labour of life, but inaction is an image of death. Surely, some artful politician, a foe to the energy of preaching, introduc'd it.

Unhappy we, whom neither our schools, nor universities teach to speak, to look, to move, or even to read properly!

To action all the renown of the ancient Orators was owing. This was the great secret, the wonder, the charm of the famous old eloquence.

It was this that shook the Areopagus, the Forum, the Capitol. It was with this, O Demosthenes and Cully, that ye lighten'd and gave your thunder.

Here all the beauties of music and painting are united. Nature is its rule, and art its accomplishment.

All the rhetoricians have ever recommended it, and all just speakers have ever practis'd it.

No man ever cavill'd at action, but he us'd it, tho' perhaps awkwardly, while he rail'd against it.

It can only be a foe to it, who is a friend to common sense, and a judge of truth and nature. In this spacious field of universal knowledge shall be the range of the orator, and as we shall celebrate the memory of persons eminent for religion, we shall not overlook such characters, as have excelled in genius and erudition, or have been patrons of them.

To them also we will consecrate a day in our calendar, and pay a grateful homage to their venerable ashes, by all the decent marks of a respectful commemoration.

Permit me now, after this sketch of our main purpose, which compos'd the first article, to submit in the

III. The pleas and motives, from which we would humbly presume on your concurrence with it.

Tho' we might here enlarge with the better confidence, since, having gone thro' the detail of our design, the number, weight, and importance of the several heads, might in themselves bespeak your candor; yet, for that very reason, we shall be concise upon it, leaving the mention of them to include the motives, and press their native force on the judgment of this audience.

Numerous as they be, difficult as they may appear, if we engage your approbation of a scheme, which is contriv'd to be a lasting honour, interest, and entertainment to our country, the difficulty will be only an incentive to our industry, and like the palm we aim at, we shall rise against the pressure.

No! shall we despair, while so many institutions are on foot, that are useless, or incumbrances, that one at least will be allow'd, let me say, indulg'd, which is intrinsically valuable, which is solidly beneficial to the public, to every rank of mankind.

There is, indeed, one singularity in our scheme, which we hope will be pardon'd, we must be diligent to merit your favour, before we can lay a claim to it.

It must be sustain'd by care, and recommended by assiduity.

It cannot be finish'd at once, like a turn of interest, by the fashionable arts of managing the humours and crises of the great; of sacrificing your souls, and putting your necks beneath the feet of the mighty.

No! we must study to deserve well, before we can expect it. Attention, and vigilance, are our avenue to success; and like the dowryings of antient Rome, many a conquest must be achiev'd before a triumph.

May the omen prosper, and yield, at length, a fortunate resemblance!

In short, to be primitive, is the beauty of religion; to be just, elegant, extensive, is the crown of knowledge.

This only is our plan.

To free the mind from darkness and fetters, that more than Egyptian bondage, the slavery of the understanding.

To oppose a tyranny over the body, is the natural bent of an English spirit; and shall the free-born soul, the immortal part, be a vassal.

Assert your selves, my fellow christians: In learning and religion, see with your own eyes,

eyes, think with your own judgments: What is more beautiful than truth? What is dearer than liberty?

On this Basis, let our structure rise; if there be any lustre in the fame, the honour of our native country; any allurement in surpassing former or present times; if there be any thing advantageous or pleasing in universal knowledge; any thing great or awful in the primitive church; let all conspire to recommend our attempt. Suffer me once to congratulate with you the first rise of a design, which contributes to all of them.

In this affair, we appeal from ignorance to politeness, from modern delusion to ancient christianity, from the adversaries of learning, to you, whom we would make the patrons and protectors of it.

Let the dignity, the worth of the undertaking be some atonement for the imperfections of those, who embark in it. Let the design engage your judgment, and let the execution of it be the object of your humanity.

N. B. If there be any Proposition in these, or any of my writings or discourses, repugnant to any law in this kingdom, it is so far acknowledg'd to be false, since a thing may be false in law, and yet may be true in divinity, fact, or argument: or, in other words, a Proposition may be judicially false, and yet really true.

of it be the object of your humanity.

Q. Now, if there be any disposition in this, to any of my writings or documents, returning to any law in this kingdom, it is to the acknowledgment of the fact, that a thing may be false in fact, and yet may be true in principle; that, of documents, of the other kind, a disposition may be judicially false, and yet really true.

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